



---

## WHO IS A GREATER SCHOLAR: AN-NAWAWEE OR AL-ALBAANEE ? - COMPARING THE SCHOLARS AGAINST EACH OTHER -

By Shaykh Mash-hoor Hasan Salmaan

Translated by Hisham Ibn Zayd

© [www.troid.org](http://www.troid.org)

---

Version 1.0 – August 19<sup>th</sup> 2004

---



### Who is a Greater Scholar: An-Nawawee or Al-Albaanee?

[Q]: Some people say that An-Nawawee is a greater scholar than Al-Albaanee (*rahimahumullaah*), whereas others say that Al-Albaanee is a greater scholar than An-Nawawee, what is your opinion regarding this?

[A]: Shaykh Mash-hoor Hasan Salmaan replied,

“Brothers, first of all ‘*mufaadalah*’ (making comparisons) between the scholars has its principles and it has its *fiqh*. The Messenger (*sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) alluded to some of these principles, and many people delve into ‘*al-mufadalaat*’ (comparisons) without knowledge and thus make horrendous mistakes, and the most repugnant kind of ‘*al-mufadalaat*’ is the situation where: ‘the one who is hearing such comparisons thinks that the one who is not given precedence is a person who lacks merit.’<sup>1</sup>

Hence, when the Messenger (*sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) heard a man preferring him to Yunus Ibn Matta, he said,

“Let no one say that I am better than Yunus Ibn Matta.”<sup>2</sup>

In spite of that fact that Allaah stated,

---

<sup>1</sup> Note: Meaning, the scholar who is said to be ‘less knowledgeable’ is given little merit.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Bukhaaree: *hadeeth* no. 608.

**“Those Messengers! We preferred some to others.”**  
[Sooratul-Baqarah, 2:253]

However, the Messenger (*sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) refused to be given preference – Why? Some of the people of knowledge have said he (*sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) said this because some people may think that the one who was not given the higher preference is a person that is worthy of criticism. Thus it is not permissible for the one who was not given preferential treatment to think that the one who was given preference above him is better than him. In general, those who came before us are better than us, this is a generality not specific.

‘*Al-mufaadalah*’ (comparison) between two scholars can be limited to one field or it can be collectively in the sense that the given scholar is better than two other scholars (for example). As for comparison between contemporaries, then this is not an easy matter especially since the scholars have a principle that states, ‘whoever extols his *shaykh* it is as if he has extolled himself.’ Meaning that whenever a student constantly praises his *Shaykh*, he is in reality praising himself because the *shaykh* in regards to the student is like his father, so just as a person exaggerates in the praise of his father, likewise for the one who exaggerates in the praise of his *shaykh*.

Our *shaykh* (Al-Albaanee) *rahimahullaah* specialised in a field and advanced it in a manner that I don’t think any one after Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajr has done. And after Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajr I don’t think that anyone has excelled *shaykh* Al-Albaanee in the service of ‘*ilmul-hadeeth*. With regards to the *Shaykh*, there those elevate him above his status and there are those who put him below the status he deserves, and both of these groups are incorrect. In one of the gatherings of our *shaykh*, I heard a person tell him that he is like *Shaykhul-Islam* Ibn Taymiyyah, so he became extremely angry and he said that, “I am a *taalibul-ilm* (student of knowledge).” Our *shaykh* always used to say that he is a *taalibul-ilm*. He died *-rahimahullaah-* in his eighties and of that age he spent more than sixty years in service to the *hadeeth* of the Messenger (*sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*), yet still he states about himself, “I am a *taalibul-ilm*.”

Today one of us reads a small book and he becomes a scholar, he places himself above other scholars and he begins to make comparison between them. You are in a state of peace and ease, what made you do that?! You are in a state of ease, remain therein and do not make things hard for yourself. I heard some people say that the *Shaykh* Al-Albaanee has more understanding than other scholars of *hadeeth* such as Aboo Daawood and others - Why? Because in his ‘*sunan*’ there are *ahaadeeth* that are weak and the *Shaykh* (Al-Albaanee) does not put weak *ahaadeeth* in his books. I said: ‘*subhaanallaah*’ this is *jahl* (ignorance), this is *jahl* with regards to the methodology of the scholars. One of the best things Aboo Dawood did with his ‘*sunan*’ was to place weak *ahaadeeth* in his book, he placed these *ahaadeeth* based on a methodology – a very scholarly one. Aboo Daawood did not just place

any *hadeeth* in his book, rather he would write chapter headings, for example the chapter, 'Blood Nullifies Wudhoo' This is as if he is saying to you; 'what I have mentioned here in my book are the strongest *hadeeth* in every chapter'. It is possible that this *hadeeth* can be the only one chosen amongst thousands of *ahaadeeth*. Thus, if Aboo Daawood mentions a *hadeeth* under a chapter heading and it is not authentic, know that those that he did not mention are even weaker. This is a very good deed that those in our present times are unable to accomplish - Why? Because the *ahaadeeth* during those times were narrated verbally in the gatherings of knowledge and those scholars travelled the earth and categorised the *ahaadeeth*. As for those who came after them, then the *ahaadeeth* that they narrate is based on what they found in manuscripts or in books, so what they find they try to utilise in the best manner possible. Thus the merits of those who came before remains, especially the distinguished Imaams, and at the head of them, the authors of *As-Saheehayn* (Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim), the *Sunan* (Aboo Dawood, At-Tirmidhee, Ibn Majah) with which we are all familiar with.

Hence, in order for a *taalibul-ilm* to distinguish himself (as a student of knowledge) he must know the methodology of these authors. So we say that *Saheehul-Bukhaaree* is the most authentic book after the book of our Lord - how is this? What do we know about Al-Bukhaaree? We do not want to know about Al-Bukhaaree simply for the sake of knowing about him, but we want to know about his book which we proudly claim that it is 'the most authentic book after the Qur'aan Al-Kareem'. We want to know about Muslim and the methodology of his book, which is the most authentic book after Al-Bukhaaree, for the *fiqh* of the Muslim hinges around these books, and all the matters of *halaal* and *haram* are in these books. Thus we must know the methodology of these scholars, then we would be seeking knowledge in the proper manner, and then we would have a proper understanding of the capacity of the scholars.

The scholars are of different categories, and if any *mufaadalah* (comparison) takes place between them, then this should be done by some one who is extremely knowledgeable, and the one who hears this should not think that by giving one scholar a higher preference than the other that this is belittling the status of the one who was given lesser preference. Also, if there is no benefit behind the *mufaadalah*, then staying away from it is better, however if there is a benefit then this is okay. In most cases any *mufaadalah* that the scholars make amongst themselves occurs amongst contemporaries, and every age has its means of knowing (who is better than who). As for *mufaadalah* between those who came before and those who came after, then this is very difficult. They say: 'perfection is rear and it is possible that it does not exist, and from what I have noticed from those scholars whom I have met is that they are basically two categories, and for every category they have their merits, good, and *barakah* within them. The first category is the one that inclines to

memorisation, and if you hear what they have memorised, you will say *subhaanallaah* to the One who gives this gift....”<sup>3</sup>



Support troid.org and other Islaamic Projects, Visit [www.troid.org/centre/support](http://www.troid.org/centre/support)



<sup>3</sup> Taken from the *fataawaa* session of Shaykh Mash-hoor Salmaan that was held during the month of Sha'baan 1424 *hijri*, Masjid Al-Albaanee, Ammaan, Jordan.